

# In Lithuania, a Soft Note Of Disquiet Starts to Rise

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**VILNIUS, Lithuania, April 26 —** At the sun-splashed farmers' market on Calvary Street, the asking price for a pound of tomatoes today was half a day's wages. The taxis parked outside demanded astronomical fares to make up for black-market gasoline costing \$20 a gallon, and the driver might well have been a newly laid off factory worker.

But 46 days after the Lithuanians proclaimed independence, and eight days after Moscow turned off the oil and gas, the most conspicuous impact of the Kremlin's sanctions in this renegade republic was not physical hardship but a mounting sense of uncertainty.

## **Most Want Independence**

Confronting the reality of pirate prices and the prospect of no paychecks, and despairing at the unwillingness of Western leaders to come to their rescue, Lithuanians seemed increasingly doubtful that their own leaders had the political will to face down President Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

Lithuanians, interviewed here on a trip to the republic by a few reporters under Foreign Ministry auspices during a Kremlin ban on travel by foreigners to the republic, said almost without exception that they were determined to be free of the Soviet Union, and many said they were willing to endure hardships for the cause.

Among Lithuanian professionals in particular the commitment to freedom is passionate, and there is a sense that criticizing the leadership is unpatriotic.

But in growing numbers they wonder aloud whether Lithuania should have rushed overnight out of the union. They question whether President Vytautas Landsbergis, a music professor who led the Sajudis independence movement, is politician enough to find a compromise. And some are tempted by the Kremlin's offer of what one Gorbachev adviser this week called a "civilized divorce," a methodical secession by Moscow's rules.

## **Little Hardship Yet**

"A lot of people say Landsbergis rushed things and a step-by-step approach might have been better," said Maryte Kavaliauskiene, 35 years old, a construction industry administrator who was shopping at the Calvary Street market. "Maybe we should have thought more about our economic position and moved a little at a time. I would like to see a compromise, but I'm afraid to predict."

Thanks to ingenuity and the bountiful Lithuanian farmland, the embargo has so far meant mostly inconvenience and mild anxiety.

Several thousand workers have

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# Uneasiness in the Lithuanian Capital

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been sent home this week as assembly lines stopped for lack of diesel fuel, natural gas, metals and other embargoed goods.

But state stores were generally better stocked than in Moscow, especially with local meat and dairy products.

"We won't starve," was the cocky prediction repeated all over the city, although some officials worry how meat lockers and bread trucks will function when the energy crunch becomes more severe in a week or two.

At the giant state grocery store on Gediminas street this afternoon, the shelves were empty of flour, rice, noodles and salt, not because Moscow has embargoed these products but because shoppers are hoarding food against blacker days ahead.

"We have per-sale limits on these products, and people simply go through the line again and again," said the manager, Bronius Tomkevicius, whose store, with its eye-catching displays of breads, cakes and peas, was still a cornucopia by Moscow standards.

The gasoline shortage has thinned traffic in the city, and occasionally a horse-drawn farm cart clip-clops through town in a proud demonstration of Lithuanian self-sufficiency.

## 'We're Getting By'

"The buses run less often, and the passengers are practically standing on each other's heads," said Mariya Paronovskaya, a schoolteacher. "But we're getting by."

Black market gas peddlers brave the police to bring carloads of cannisters from neighboring Soviet Byelorussia, to be sold through friends or to customers savvy enough to cruise the parking lot at a market on the Vilnius outskirts. Several taxi drivers said another source of illegal fuel has been Soviet soldiers, who sell the army's gasoline on side streets near military bases.

Estonia, another Baltic republic bent on independence, announced today that it would defy Moscow's blockade to provide whatever help it could to Lithuania. This show of solidarity compensated only slightly for the growing sense of betrayal Lithuanians feel toward the West.

## Moscow's Terms for Secession

The Kremlin has said that if Lithuania freezes its independence claim and acknowledges the Soviet Constitution, the republic can enjoy economic and political autonomy while it follows Moscow's new rules for a proper secession — a referendum, a transition period of up to five years to satisfy economic and territorial claims, and final approval by the Soviet Congress.

Mr. Landsbergis insists that his republic, forcibly annexed in 1940, will never acknowledge Soviet sovereignty. He argues that once a republic submits



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Soviet embargoes have not meant much hardship in Vilnius.

to Soviet rule, it will never escape, a suspicion widely shared here.

And yet Lithuanians seem to think there must be a compromise that is eluding their leaders.

## 'He Is Not a Politician'

"Landsbergis talks a lot and dreams a lot, but he is not a politician," said a young woman serving beverages at a Vilnius fruit juice bar. "We cannot turn back. But we need somebody smart enough to show us a way out."

The figure who commands the broadest trust is Algirdas Brazauskas, leader of the breakaway Lithuanian Communist Party and now a deputy prime minister, who argued from the outset for a more gradual disengage-

ment from the Soviet Union, but who has muted his misgivings to avoid seeming overly ambitious.

Mr. Brazauskas had a 93 percent approval rating in a Gallup survey conducted just before the embargo, handily outpolling Mr. Landsbergis. "Brazauskas would move more quietly but he would get farther," said a carpenter. "Everyone knows Gorbachev will never negotiate with Landsbergis."

Privately journalists and legislators loyal to Sajudis voice misgivings. About 40 of the 138 members of Parliament have formed a centrist group quietly pushing for compromise.

"We should revoke a few misguided laws and then enter into negotiations with Moscow," said one member of the group. "We can negotiate for five years if necessary, and meanwhile we build up Lithuania for real independence."

Mr. Landsbergis, asked about signs of waning public trust, said it was not his fault that Moscow refused to talk to him. Independence, he added, was the will of Parliament and "substitution of one person in the leadership would not make any essential difference."

## Lithuanian Dies in Protest

MOSCOW, April 26 (Reuters) — A Lithuanian burned himself to death outside the Bolshoi Theater in central Moscow today. Tass said the man, identified as Stanislovas Zemaitis, 52 years old, poured about half a can of gasoline over himself and then lit a match. Hospital officials said he died later. Tass said no demands of a political character had been found, but witnesses said it was clear the act was a protest.